

Julie Christie, Tom Courtenay, Alec Guinness etc give the Russian accent a decent workout. Not one of Lean's best films, but certainly one of his most popular. Next we come to one of Lean's worst: *Ryan's Daughter* (1970) is a simple love story blown up to gargantuan proportions. The story is set in Northern Ireland, where young Sarah Miles marries plodding schoolteacher Robert Mitchum (no typecasting there!) and has an affair with a dashing young British Army officer (wooden Christopher Jones) stationed in their small town. John Mills won an Oscar for his moving portrayal of the hunchbacked village idiot, but this lumbering movie is not equal to the sum of its parts. Far more effective is *A Passage To India*, Lean's final film, and a meticulously crafted adaptation of the E.M. Forster novel set in the India of the 1920s. The main theme is the culture clash between East and West, which reaches a dramatic highlight in a mysterious encounter between a well-bred Indian doctor (Victor Bannerjee) and a naive young Englishwoman (Judy Davis). Though not a great film, this still looks and feels like fine cinema. The only element that seems wrong is Maurice Jarre's strident score - which typically won an Oscar! Staying with classic drama we come to *David Copperfield*, George Cukor's superb 1935 film version of the Dickens story. A wonderful cast and high gloss production values bring this one glowingly to life: Basil Rathbone is a fiendish Murdstone, W.C. Fields is spot-on as Micawber, Roland Young is suitably oily as Uriah Heep, and young

Freddie Bartholomew is unforgettable as the eponymous hero. Trivia note: Hugh Walpole, one of the screenplay writers, turns up in the cast playing a vicar; More Hollywoodised Dickens can be found in *A Tale Of Two Cities*, made in 1935 by director Jack Conway. Charlie's panorama of the 1780's French Revolution becomes your everyday MGM blockbuster, with Ronald Colman sporting an upper-lip as stiff as his high collar as the carefree lawyer who aids victims of

BARGAIN BASEMENT



the Reign of Terror. A tremendous cast and lavish production values make this a far, far better thing to see on video than most of the rubbish around nowadays! *Julius Caesar* is a superior 1953 version of Shakespeare's play about political power struggles in ancient Rome. Marlon Brando is a bit off as Mark Antony, but he's backed up by a

formidable cast of character players and the film as a whole is superbly produced, with Oscar-winning art direction and set design. The trouble with this story is that whenever they shout "Hail Caesar!" you expect old Julius to reply, "It's all right - I've brought my brolly!" Exactly this kind of sophisticated humour can be found in the last Warner release this month,



The Comedians. Twenty years ago, Granada's award-winning TV show of the same name gave a group of young comics their first break. To mark the 20th anniversary of the show, nine of the original team (Roy Walker, Bernard Manning, Stan Boardman, Charlie Williams, George Roper, Mick Miller, Duggie Brown, Ivor Davis and Tony Jo) re-united to stage a comedy concert in aid of The Guide Dogs For The Blind. Filmed in front of a capacity audience at Quaffers Nitespot (where were you expecting, The Palladium?), this 18-rated vid contains a lot of very naughty gags indeed and is just the thing to keep in reserve for stag parties, or if you want to get rid of the mother-in-law!

PUMPKIN UP THE VOLUME



This month brings the highlight of the horror year - Halloween. We've taken a haunting look at a host of movies witch we reckon make the occasion a real treat. The trick is, to win yourself some!

Picture

the scene: It's

Halloween night and you and a bunch of your teenage mates are at a loss for what to do. "I know," says the-real-nerd-who-nobody likes, "let's all go over to that abandoned haunted house and have a Halloween party. You know the house I mean, it's the one where a bunch of teenagers were found slaughtered last year, right next door to the asylum."

"Do you mean that asylum that's just been on the news because the world's worst homicidal maniac has just escaped from there armed with a variety of sharp instruments?"

"That's the one."

"Well then, what are we waiting for? Let's party!"

John Carpenter's 1978 horror hit *Halloween*. This cult favourite proved there was money to be made in movies about brainless teenagers being sliced 'n' diced by faceless maniacs who are only marginally more interesting as characters than the losers they so cheerfully butcher. Sam Goldwyn once said: "what we need are some brand new cliches" and *Halloween* provided the horror genre with a whole bunch of them, perpetuated in forgettable fear flicks like *Prom Night*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Hell Night*, *New Year's Evil* and so on. There is of course a financial incentive to consider, because if you include the most recent installment, *Halloween 5*, to the Carpenter instigated series the takings are an astonishing \$220 million

If this scene sounds familiar then you've very probably encountered something similar to it in any one of the hundred low-budget straight-to-video horror clinkers that have proliferated since

at the US box-office alone, so no wonder everyone else wants to copy it! The *Halloween* craze began in 1978 with the first ground-breaking *Halloween* movie. Shot for a meagre \$320,000, it was originally to have been called *The Baby Sitter Murders*, but writer/director Carpenter wisely decided that using the title *Halloween* instead would give the film a mythic feel. It's a little-known fact that he named his unstoppable murderer after Michael Myers, the well-known English film executive who got his career into first gear by distributing *Assault on Precinct 13* in the UK!

The first part of what was to become an interminable series starred Jamie Lee Curtis and the inescapable Donald Pleasence. It set up the legend as follows: on Halloween night 1963, six-year-old Michael Myers caught his sister making love with her boyfriend and was so incensed by this that he promptly stabbed her to death. Following fifteen years of staring at the walls in a local booby hatch, Mikey (who is now known as 'The Boogey Man') escapes and returns to his home town of Haddonfield to tear up the town and a good proportion of the local teens. The only one he doesn't kill is virginal young Jamie Lee, but he does have a damn good try...

The original *Halloween* (Channel 5) was built on a morally dubious premise and had plot holes you could drive a Chieftan tank through, but at least it was accomplished with some degree of slickness and panache, thanks to Carpenter's skilled direction (which made particularly effective use of the widescreen frame) and his own creepy music score. Unfortunately the multitude of stalk and slash atrocities it ushered in - including its own sequels - were more trick than treat. Carpenter's original model at least took some time to introduce its characters before despatching them, but copycat efforts like *The Burning* and *My Bloody Valentine* were nothing more than simplistic exercises in raising the body count. These movies had some decent gore effects to recommend them, but the vast majority of *Halloween* clones were chopped to ribbons by the censors anyway. So you got acres of footage of idiotic teens wandering around in the woods, checking out old dark houses, or nosing into dusty cellars. And when they were accosted by the statutory hockey-masked loony the scene ended abruptly just as they were about to part company with a significant percentage of their anatomy. Shame!

T h e

Halloween series itself continued with *Halloween 2* (Castle), which begins immediately as the first one ended and was mainly set in the suspiciously deserted Haddonfield hospital, where Jamie Lee had been taken to recover from Michael's initial attack. As per usual the

doctors and nurses were more concerned with getting a bit of nookie in the hot tub than looking after their patients and they paid the expected price for their promiscuity with an axe through the noggin etc. This movie was less about the eerie mystique of *Halloween* itself than the spooky atmosphere attached to hospitals and as such has more in common with other hospital-based chillers like *X-Ray* and *Visiting Hours*.

But the balance was redressed with *Halloween 3 - Season of the Witch* (Warner), a stylish little effort that was scripted by *Quatermass* author Nigel Kneale. Not just another knife-kill time waster, but rather a pretty respectable supernatural yarn about a crazy toymaker who planned to bring back the true spirit of *Halloween* by manufacturing masks that did dreadful things to their wearers. Kneale complained that Carpenter had done terrible things to his original script by adding a few unnecessary gore scenes, but on the whole the movie is a welcome change from its predecessors and at least tries to make *Halloween* itself important to the plotline.

Whatever audiences thought of it, the film looked like a classic when compared to *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*





good run for his money in the loony stakes. Mike just plods around silently and menacingly, while Doolally Don charges around ranting and raving in such a way that it's a wonder he doesn't knock the camera over. He eventually goes completely over the top in the final scenes, attacking his murderous nemesis with a 2x4 plank and bellowing, "Die! Die! Die!" - which is about as likely as Pleasence winning an Oscar for his performance.

Of course Michael Myers isn't the only monstrous figure to come stalking and slashing on Halloween night. The success of the movie series has brought new life - and death - to this pagan holiday when

(Braveworld). By the time this was made, John Carpenter had sold off all his rights to the series and left it in the far from capable hands of producer Moustapha Akkad. The result was a real mess, with crazy old Donald Pleasence miraculously alive again after we all saw him toasted in a fiery inferno at the end of *Part 2*. As for Michael, well he was back in the loony bin serving a zillion year sentence. But of course it was hardly surprising when he escaped to once more carve up the long-suffering citizens of Haddonfield. Hey, haven't we been here before? Equally predictable was *Halloween 5*

(Capital Video), the far-from-adventurous tone of which is summed up by the sequence in which good old mad Mike comes across two brain-dead lovers making out in a barn. The gal tells her boyfriend that they can't do it unless he comes up with some kind of protection. Grinning dopily, the lunk-headed hunk pulls out a condom. But there's no such thing as safe sex when Michael's in the vicinity: he grabs a pitchfork and we're in for a choice spot of what might be described in the porn business as 'double penetration'. In this one it quickly becomes clear that Donald Pleasence can give Michael a

abroad on their broomsticks (with the price of air travel nowadays, it's the only way to fly). Halloween is an event that has always been celebrated more by the Americans than us, but the movies have brought it into our consciousness. Let's face it: if it's good enough for ET to go trick-or-treating, then it's good enough for us.

As most other dates on the calendar have been appropriated as anniversaries of some kind of atrocity or other (though so far there have been no takers for *The Bank Holiday Monday Massacre*), film-makers keep returning to trusty old Halloween. More

Halloween horrors can be found in the aptly-titled *Trick or Treat* (Palace), a fearful fable about a dead rock singer who returns from the grave to wreak some headbanging revenge when one of his fans plays his unreleased last album backwards. This entertaining shocker directed by Charlie Martin Smith (the bespectacled member of Brian De Palma's *Untouchables*) winds up with a memorable *Carrie*-type sequence when the zombie rocker turns up to set the sparks flying at a Halloween night prom.

Another movie that employs a Halloween setting is *Night of the Demons* (Palace), a typically dumb affair in which a bunch of oversexed teens decide to hold a Halloween party in a haunted mortuary



(hey, haven't we heard this one before?). Then someone gets the none-too-bright idea of holding a seance. Bad move, kids. Before long, two of the girls are possessed by the spirit of an evil demon and return to the party to wreak havoc on their friends. Obviously inspired by *The Evil Dead*, this straight-to-video nonsense is enlivened by some good special effects and the raunchy presence of low-rent scream queen Linnea Quigley.

Much the same type of plot turned up way back in the 'Swinging' 60s in a silly little movie called *The Haunted House of Horror*. This starred beach party favourite Frankie Avalon as a 30-year-old teenager who says to his mates at Halloween: "Let's all have a haunted house party". So off they go to a remote old mansion where evil doings have occurred in the past and after about twenty minutes of wandering around in the dark one of their number is viciously slashed to death with a jagged-bladed Kukri knife. The chief suspects include pop star Mark Wynter and Richard O'Sullivan (of *Robin's Nest* and *Man About The House*) sit-com fame, so you can tell that dramatic realism is not a keynote here. The queen of Halloween in America is Elvira (aka Cassandra Peterson), the TV

horror hostess whose popular stage show has done a lot to keep the spirit of this haunted

holiday

alive. She made her movie debut in *Elvira - Mistress of the Dark* (New World), a jokey affair in which Elvira inherits a haunted house in the staid New England community of Falwell. Her presence there causes major consternation to the prim and proper locals until she whips up a batch of magical casserole that causes them to lose all their inhibitions and indulge in a wild orgy! Elvira is a cross between Mae West and Morticia of *The Addams Family* and with chest measurements that would overload a pocket calculator she looks like she would probably fit very nicely into a Russ Meyer film! Finally CIC are bringing out a collection specifically for the big night and, although the action doesn't actually take place on Halloween there's still scares a plenty in Stephen King's, *Pet Semetary*, the first bunch of *Tales from the Crypt* (check out our Sneak Preview

COMPETITION

10 CIC HALLOWEEN PACKS TO BE WON

As it's the time of year when Stuart Kirkham and all things unholy come out to play we're giving you the opportunity to have a Halloween to remember. CIC have given us 10 triple packs of terror to give away comprising of *Tales from the Crypt*, *Pet Semetary* and *The Serpent & the Rainbow*. You could win a set if you can tell us which Wes Craven film starred current teen fave Johnny

Depp. Answers to: Help I'm On A Package Holiday From Hell Comp., Video World Magazine, The Northern & Shell Building, PO Box 381, Millharbour, London E14 9TW.

The Dead Line is October 20th



for some more on the second series) and a former VW classic, *The Serpent and the Rainbow*.

So, that's about it, the witching hour approaches and my word-processor is about to change into a pumpkin! Any of the above-mentioned movies are highly suitable for Halloween night viewing, or better still you might prefer to really get into the spirit of things and go trick-or-treating your neighbours - providing you don't live next door to a loony bin. Here at *Video World* we have our own way of celebrating: we all clamber on to the Ed's broomstick and nip off to a wild party somewhere. You're invited as well, of course. It's at the usual address in Elm Street - the last house on the left...

TALES FROM

Heh, heh, heh, gore fans, prepare yourselves for a mouth-watering assortment of terror tales coming your way from some of the genre's leading boys 'n' ghouls.

In 1954, comic book publisher William M. Gaines was called before a Senate Sub-Committee, where an irate politician held up the current edition of a Gaines comic called *Tales From The Crypt*. The angry politico ranted: "The cover of this magazine shows a man with a bloody axe holding a woman's head up, which seems to have been severed from her body. Do you think that is in good taste?"

Gaines thought a moment before replying, "Yes sir, I do, for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the blood could be seen dripping from it."

The scene was repeated in England a short while later, where a furious MP held up another copy of the 'despicable' Gaines mag which had a story in it about a baseball team who took revenge on a cheating player by dismembering him and using 'his long strings of pulpy intestines' to mark the base line for a midnight game! "This certainly isn't cricket" pointed out the worthy fellow, proving he knew more about sport than what constituted a good horror tale.

Gaines' E.C. company (E.C. originally stood for Educational Comics, then later became Entertaining Comics) were now notorious for their graphic terror tales, later described by no less an authority than Stephen King as "a horrific layer cake of terror on top, horror below, and lowest of all, the gag reflex of revulsion."

This notoriety led to the creation of the Comics Code Authority, designed to protect youngsters from horrific imagery. It brought with it the collapse of Gaines' comic book empire. But E.C. didn't fade into obscurity. They returned from the grave to have the last ghoulish laugh, like most of the characters in their stories.

The English company, Amicus, made two

